

Message Text

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TO USINT HAVANA

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TAGS: CASC, CU, US

SUBJECT: NOON BRIEFING, 6/13/78

Q. LAST NIGHT IN HAVANA CUBAN PRESIDENT CASTRO INTERVIEWED WITH SEVERAL REPORTERS. AMONG OTHER THINGS HE SAID THAT ON MAY 19, TWO DAYS AFTER A MEETING WITH THE US HEAD OF THE INTERESTS SECTION, LYLE LANE, HE RECEIVED A REPLY FROM THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT EXPRESSING FROM SECRETARY VANCE HIS APPRECIATION AT WHAT CASTRO HAD SAID AND MAKING CERTAIN OTHER REMARKS.

CAN YOU CONFIRM TO US THAT THIS MESSAGE WAS FROM SECRETARY VANCE AND CAN YOU TELL US WHAT IT SAID?

A. I WILL TAKE THAT QUESTION AND SEE WHETHER I CAN GET YOU AN ANSWER.

Q. COULD I JUST ADD AN AMPLIFICATION TO THAT PARTICULAR QUESTION? THERE ARE DIFFERENT VERSIONS OF WHAT HE SAI
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THERE, BUT WAS THERE A MESSAGE FROM THE STATE DEPARTMENT OR FROM THE US GOVERNMENT AT A HIGH LEVEL TO MR. CASTRO THAT WEEK?

THERE SEEMS TO BE AN INDICATION THAT THAT MESSAGE ACTUALLY WAS SENT PRIOR TO MR. CASTRO'S MEETING WITH MR. LANE.

AND WAS THEREA MEETING BY A US GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL IN NEW YORK WITH MR. RODRIGUEZ, THE CUBAN VICE PRESIDENT, ON OR ABOUT MAY 18 OR 19, IN WHICH COMMENTS WERE MADE PRAISING

OR EXPRESSING APPRECIATION OF THE CUBAN ROLE VIS-A-VIS THE SHABA BUSINESS?

A. I WILL TAKE ALL OF THOSE QUESTIONS.

Q. ALL RIGHT, COULD I GO ON TO ANOTHER THING?

IN THE INTERVIEW, MR. CASTRO IS QUOTED AS HAVING SAID -- I AM QUOTING NOW FROM THE WASHINGTON STAR -- HE -- MEANING CASTRO -- DENOUNCED AS "ABSOLUTE COMPLETE LIES" THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION'S CLAIMS TO HAVE EVIDENCE OF "RECENT" CUBAN AID TO THE KATANGANS.

IF YOU WILL RECALL, IT WAS ON MAY 19 THAT YOU VOLUNTEERED THAT THE US GOVERNMENT NOW HAS -- IT IS NOW OUR UNDERSTANDING THAT THE INSURGENTS IN SHABA PROVINCE HAD BEEN TRAINED RECENTLY BY CUBANS.

WHAT IS YOUR RESPONSE TO MR. CASTRO'S CHARGE THAT WHAT YOU SAID WAS A COMPLETE, ABSOLUTE TOTAL LIE?

A. I STAND ON WHAT THE GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN SAYING HERE.

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Q. AS YOU KNOW, THE GOVERNMENT'S VERSION IS NOT ACCEPTED AS CONCLUSIVE BY SEVERAL MEMBERS OF THE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE.

DO YOU HAVE ANY FEELING THAT THE US GOVERNMENT IS UNDER ANY OBLIGATION TO BE MORE EXPLICIT ABOUT WHAT ITS EVIDENCE IS?

A. I THINK HODDING DEALT WITH THIS QUESTION YESTERDAY. I HEAR YOUR CONCERNS, BUT AS OF THE MOMENT I AM NOT IN A POSITION TO DETAIL ANY FURTHER FOR YOU.

Q. TOM, YOU SAID, WHEN YOU FIRST MADE THAT STATEMENT, WHICH DON SAYS WAS THE 19TH OF MAY, I HAVE FORGOTTEN THE DATE -- WHEN YOU FIRST MADE THE STATEMENT, YOU SAID YOU HAD JUST COME BACK FROM THE WHITE HOUSE AND YOU WERE BRINGING THIS INFORMATION FRESH FROM THE WHITE HOUSE. AS YOU RECALL, YOU HAD SOME INCREDULOUS QUESTIONS HERE AT THE TIME, BECAUSE THE STATE DEPARTMENT, SO FAR AS ANYBODY AROUND HERE SEEMED TO KNOW, HAD NO SUCH INFORMATION.

CAN YOU GIVE US ANY BETTER FILL-IN NOW ON WHY THE WHITE HOUSE MIGHT HAVE HAD SUCH INFORMATION AT THAT DATE AND THE STATE DEPARTMENT DIDN'T?

A. NO, I CAN'T REALLY. INFORMATION IS RECEIVED FROM TIME TO TIME, AND I DON'T REALLY KNOW WHO HAD THE INFORMA-

TION FIRST.

THERE WERE NUMEROUS PEOPLE THERE FROM DIFFERENT AGENCIES,
AND NOT ONLY THE WHITE HOUSE, BUT THERE WERE A NUMBER OF
AGENCIES REPRESENTED AT THE MEETING WHICH I ATTENDED.

IT IS NOT A QUESTION OF SOMEBODY -- I DON'T THINK YOU SHOULD
DRAW ANY PARTICULAR MEANING OUT OF THE WAY THE INFORMATION
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AROSE.

Q. TOM, IS THE STATE DEPARTMENT AND THE WHITE HOUSE
WORKING OFF THE SAME DATA BASE, OR WHATEVER YOU WANT TO
CALL IT?

A. SO FAR AS I KNOW.

Q. AND SHOULD WE ASSUME THAT THE INFORMATION REACHES
THE WHITE HOUSE BEFORE IT REACHES THE STATE DEPARTMENT,
OR SHOULD WE ASSUME THAT IT IS INTERPRETED DIFFERENTLY
AT THE WHITE HOUSE THAN THE WAY IT IS INTERPRETED AT THE
STATE DEPARTMENT?

A. NO. I DON'T THINK THAT ANY OF THIS IMPLICATIONS SHOULD
BE DRAWN FROM ANY OF THIS ON-GOING QUESTION.

Q. TOM, I DON'T ASK THIS EMBARRASS YOU, BUT IF YOU RECALL,
YOU MADE THAT STATEMENT THAT WE ARE TALKING ABOUT IN THE
AFTERNOON. THAT EVENING A SENIOR OFFICIAL AGAIN
EXPRESSED NO KNOWLEDGE OF SUCH INFORMATION.

SO IT IS CORRECT TO ASSUME THAT YOUR STATEMENT DID NOT
COME FROM INSTRUCTIONS FROM THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF THIS
BUILDING.

A. I'M SORRY, I AM AFRAID YOUR --

Q. LET ME ASK THE QUESTION. THE QUESTION IS, WERE YOU
INSTRUCTED TO MAKE THAT STATEMENT BY THE WHITE HOUSE?

A. I AM NOT GOING TO GET INTO HOW THAT STATEMENT CAME TO
BE MADE.
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Q. WELL, IT IS IMPORTANT BECAUSE MR. CASTRO IS ALLEGING
HERE THAT THIS WHOLE THING WAS A CONCOCTION FROM
MR. BRZEZINSKI'S OFFICE.

A. I REALLY CAN'T GET INTO THAT.

Q. TOM, WHEN THE WHITE HOUSE GAVE YOU THIS INFORMATION ABOUT RECENT TRAINING, DID IT DEFINE RECENT IN A TIMEFRAME -- DAYS, WEEKS, MONTHS?

A. IT DID NOT AS I RECALL. BUT AS I THINK I RECALL FROM ONE OF MY PAST BRIEFINGS HERE, IT WAS MEANT TO DRAW A DISTINCTION BETWEEN SOMETHING WHICH MAY HAVE HAPPENED A YEAR AGO, OR THAT FAR AGO.

Q. SO RECENT MEANS THEN LESS THAN A YEAR AGO.

A. YES.

Q. COULD YOU SAY NOW, TOM, THAT THERE IS AGREEMENT AT THE TOP LEVELS OF BOTH STATE AND THE WHITE HOUSE THAT THE CUBANS HAD ENGAGED IN RECENT TRAINING OF THE KATANGANS BEFORE THE INVASION OF SHABA?

A. THAT IS MY UNDERSTANDING, YES.

Q. BUT RECENT MEANS SOME TIME WITHIN THE PAST YEAR.

A. THAT IS MY UNDERSTANDING.

Q. RECENT MEANS WITHIN WHAT? WHAT TIMEFRAME ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT, WITHIN THE PAST YEAR?

A. I DON'T WANT TO QUANTIFY EXACTLY HOW MANY DAYS RECENT MEANS BECAUSE I AM JUST NOT AWARE OF THE PRECISE UNCLASSIFIED

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QUANTIFICATION ON THE THING.

I THINK I SAID THAT IT WAS EVENTS LEADING UP TO THE INCURSION INTO SHABA.

Q. YOU USE WORDS PRESUMABLY WITH CARE FROM THAT PODIUM, AND YOU USED THE WORD RECENT TO SUGGEST SOME KIND OF RECENT TRAINING, PRESUMABLY, RIGHT?

A. YES.

Q. NOW, RECENT IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE MEANS WITHIN THE LAST COUPLE OF WEEKS, RIGHT? IS THAT WHAT YOU CONVEYED, OR ARE YOU TRYING TO STRETCH IT OUT OVER A YEAR?

A. NO, I AM NOT TRYING TO QUANTIFY THE NUMBER OF DAYS THAT THE INFORMATION WOULD LEAD US TO BELIEVE -- THE NUMBER OF DAYS INVOLVED IN WHEN THE TRAINING TOOK PLACE.

Q. WHY NOT?

A. BECAUSE IN THE FIRST PLACE, I DON'T HAVE THAT INFORMATION, AND, IN THE SECOND PLACE, --

Q. IT SEEMS TO BE THE FOCAL POINT OF THIS WHOLE DEBATE HERE.

Q. WHAT DOES RECENT MEAN WHEN YOU USE THE WORD, TOM?

A. THE BEST I CAN DO FOR YOU, MARVIN, IS WHAT I DID FOR YOU OUT OF THE BRIEFING A COUPLE OF WEEKS AGO. THAT IS THE

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BEST TIMEFRAME I CAN PUT, THE BEST DEFINITION OF THE WORD RECENT -- EVENTS LEADING UP TO THE INCURSION INTO SHABA.

Q. TOM, EXCUSE ME, LATER HODDING SAID THAT THE TRAINING -- AND I THINK I AM RIGHT IF I QUOTE HIM -- LED UP TO THE INVASION, WHICH COULD MEAN 24 HOURS JUST BEFORE THEY LEFT.

A. IF I CAN'T GET INTO A NUMBER OF DAYS, I CERTAINLY CAN'T GET INTO A NUMBER OF HOURS AS TO WHEN THIS ACTIVITY WAS TAKING PLACE.

Q. BUT TRAINING LEADING UP TO THE INVASION -- I DON'T KNOW WHAT IT MEANS.

A. I AM NOT GOING TO GET INTO AN HOURS, MINUTES, SECONDS THING. I AM JUST NOT ABLE TO.

Q. DID YOU AT ONE POINT USE THE TERM NINE MONTHS IN DEFINING RECENT?

A. NO. I THINK THAT WOULD NOT BE CONSIDERED RECENT.

Q. NINE MONTHS WOULD NOT BE CONSIDERED RECENT?

A. I DON'T THINK THIS IS FRUITFUL BECAUSE I DON'T HAVE

THE INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO ME THAT COULD QUANTIFY EXACTLY HOW MANY DAYS, HOURS, MINUTES, SECONDS, WHEN ALL THIS ACTIVITY WAS TAKING PLACE.

Q. DO YOU HAVE ANY NEW INFORMATION OR RECENT INFORMATION ON THAT PLANE THAT WAS DOWNED IN CUBA? APPARENTLY HODDING SAID YESTERDAY THAT CUBA IS GOING TO PRESS CHARGES. HE DIDN'T KNOW WHAT KIND OF CHARGES. HAVE YOU ANYTHING SINCE
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YESTERDAY?

A. NO. WE STILL DON'T HAVE -- AT LEAST AS OF ABOUT 11:00 THIS MORNING WHEN I CHECKED -- ANY FORMAL DIPLOMATIC NOTIFICATION THAT CHARGES WILL BE PRESSED. I DID SEE A REPORT IN THE NEWSPAPER THIS MORNING THAT CHARGES WERE GOING TO BE PRESSED, BUT SO FAR AS I KNOW WE ARE NOT OFFICIALLY AWARE OF IT.

Q. WELL, GIVEN THE CURRENT STATE OF RELATIONS OR LACK OF RELATIONS WITH CUBA, WOULD YOU EXPECT TO GET FORMAL NOTIFICATION IN SUCH MATTERS, LEGAL MATTERS? IS THAT CHANNEL STILL OPEN?

A. YES, THAT CHANNEL IS STILL OPEN. WE HAVE OUR INTERESTS SECTION DOWN THERE. IT IS PRECISELY THE KIND OF THING THAT WE FIND THAT OUR INTERESTS SECTION IS USEFUL FOR. AND IT IS NORMAL DIPLOMATIC PROCEDURE, IN MY UNDERSTANDING, THAT WHEN FOREIGN NATIONALS GET INTO TROUBLE, THAT THEIR DIPLOMATS ARE NOTIFIED.

Q. HAS ANY AMERICAN IN THE INTERESTS SECTION SEEN THEM OR BEEN REQUESTED TO SEE THEM?

A. NOT THAT I AM AWARE OF. THE LAST READING WE HAD WAS THAT THEY WERE STILL IN CAMAGUEY, AND OUR PEOPLE ARE IN HAVANA. BUT LET ME SEE IF I CAN CHECK ON THAT.

Q. TOM, THE REASON WE KNOW THAT THE CUBANS ARE PRESSING CHARGES IS THAT HODDING, FROM THAT PLACE, SAID IT YESTERDAY, ALTHOUGH HE SAID THEY HAVEN'T -- IT SAYS THE CUBANS ARE PRESSING CHARGES ON THE THREE, BUT WE HAVEN'T RECEIVED AN OFFICIAL NOTE ON WHAT THE CHARGES WOULD BE.
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A. THEN, I HAVE GOT IT WRONG. I THINK IT WILL JUST STICK WITH WHAT HODDING SAID YESTERDAY. BUT THERE ARE NO FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS THAT WE ARE AWARE OF IN THE MATTER.

Q. BUT WILL YOU STILL TRY TO SEE?

A. YES.

Q. TOM, ON A CUBA-RELATED ISSUE, IN THE SAME PRESS CONFERENCE, CASTRO APPARENTLY SAID THAT HE WAS ALLOWING ABOUT 1,600 CUBAN-AMERICANS TO LEAVE THE ISLAND. HAS THE STATE DEPT BEEN INFORMED OF THAT? DO YOU HAVE ANYTHING?

A. I SAW THAT PRESS REPORT THIS MORNING. I DON'T HAVE

ANYTHING ON IT FOR YOU, BUT CERTAINLY IF THE REPORT IS TRUE, WE WOULD WELCOME IT AS A POSITIVE SIGN. IT IS JUST EXACTLY THIS KIND OF THING, AS I SAID A MOMENT AGO, THAT OUR INTERESTS SECTION IS USEFUL FOR. IT IS THE POLICY OF THIS ADMINISTRATION TO MAINTAIN COMMUNICATIONS WITH ALL GOVERNMENTS, WHETHER WE APPROVE OF THEM OR THEIR POLICIES. OUR INTERESTS SECTION IN HAVANA HAS BEEN EXTREMELY USEFUL IN MAINTAINING CONTACTS WITH THE CUBAN GOVT AND IN REACHING EXPEDITIOUS SOLUTIONS TO THOSE PROBLEMS THAT INEVITABLY ARISE BETWEEN NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES REGARDLESS OF THE STATE OF THEIR RELATIONS. THE PRESENCE OF THE INTERESTS SECTION, FOR EXAMPLE, HAS NOT ONLY PERMITTED A GREATER DEGREE OF COMMUNICATION WITH THE CUBAN GOVT, BUT IT HAS HELPED TO FACILITATE THE SOLUTION TO A NUMBER OF PROBLEMS INVOLVING US CITIZENS, SUCH AS THIS ONE.

Q. TOM, HOW CAN YOU SAY THAT? THIS WAS STEVE SOLARZ AND THREE REPORTERS, NOT THE INTERESTS SECTION.

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A. BUT THE INTERESTS SECTION HAS BEEN WORKING ON THIS PROBLEM CONSISTENTLY SINCE THEY HAVE BEEN DOWN THERE, AND PRESSING OUR CONCERNS WITH THE CUBAN GOVT.

Q. TOM, WHY DID YOU BACK INTO A GLOWING DEFENSE OF THE INTERESTS SECTION?

A. I WANTED TO MAKE CLEAR HOW IMPORTANT WE THINK THE WORK THAT OUR INTERESTS SECTION DOES DOWN THERE.

Q. TOM, DO WE USE THE INTERESTS SECTION TO COMMUNICATE TO THE CUBANS IN SOME WAY THAT YOU WOULDN'T CONSIDER HARMFUL TO THE UNITED STATES SOME OF THIS EVIDENCE YOU CLAIM TO HAVE OF CUBAN INVOLVEMENT IN THE SHABA INCURSION? WOULDN'T THAT BE A USEFUL USE OF THE INTERESTS SECTION?

A. I DON'T KNOW. AND IN ANY EVENT, I PROBABLY WOULDN'T GET INTO THE SUBSTANCE OF OUR DIPLOMATIC EXCHANGES.

Q. TOM, ON YOUR STATEMENT ON THE INTERESTS SECTION, CAN WE TAKE THAT AS BEING AN ANSWER TO QUESTIONS THAT WERE RAISED HERE LAST THURSDAY ABOUT DEMANDS FROM THE HILL THAT THE INTERESTS SECTION BE CLOSED, AND THAT OTHER MEASURES BE TAKEN TO RETALIATE AGAINST THE CUBANS?

A. REED, I WAS IN GREAT STATE OF MAINE LAST THURSDAY, AND I HAVE NOT READ THE TRANSCRIPT OF WHAT WAS RAISED HERE LAST WEEK.

Q. WELL, THE QUESTION WAS RAISED THAT THERE HAD BEEN A LOT OF DEMANDS AND THAT HODDING SAID HE WOULD LOOK INTO IT, AND SEE WHAT THE ANSWER WAS.

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THIS SEEMS TO BE AN INDICATION THAT WE ARE NOT GOING TO-- WE DON'T HAVE UNDER CONSIDERATION CLOSING THE INTERESTS SECTION. WOULD THAT BE A CORRECT INTERPRETATION?

A. I HAVE STATED THE POSITION OF HOW WE REGARD OUR DIPLOMATIC MISSION DOWN THERE, AND WHAT WE THINK IT IS USEFUL FOR. IF YOU REGARD THAT AS AN ANSWER TO THOSE CHARGES --

Q. WELL, TO FOLLOW UP ON THAT, THERE WERE SOME OTHER THINGS THAT WERE SUGGESTED BY PEOPLE ON THE HILL AND PEOPLE HERE; NAMELY, FOR EXAMPLE, CUTTING OFF TOURIST TRAVEL, CUTTING OFF REMITTANCES, AND SO ON.

DID YOUR PEOPLE GIVE YOU ANY STATEMENT REFERRING TO THOSE SUGGESTIONS, ALSO?

A. I DON'T HAVE ANYTHING ON THAT, REED.

CHRISTOPHER

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